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the longitudinal ribs [have] having been exposed to a [low uniform] radially acting second pressure, [radial relative to a longitudinal mid-axis of the preform, in such a way that outer] the second pressure being lower than the first pressure so as to provide a soft structure at the distal ends of the longitudinal ribs [exhibit a soft smooth surface, with the coarser capillary structure corresponding to the final form of the tampon being maintained].

Cont.
2. (Twice Amended) Tampon according to Claim 1, wherein the blank comprises a needled nonwoven tape consisting of 100% rayon fibre, wherein the absorbent portion of the tampon[,] has a weight of no more than 2.4 g [without the recovery tape], and has a specific absorption capacity of at least 4.8 ml/g at an absorption rate of at least 1.9 ml/s.

3. (Twice Amended) Tampon according to Claim 2, wherein the absorption capacity of the tampon is [about] at least 11.3 ml at a static counterpressure of 20 mbars.

4. (Twice Amended) Tampon according to Claim 2, wherein at a pulsating counterpressure of 20 to 110 mbars, the absorption capacity of the tampon is [about] at least 8.0 ml and the specific absorption capacity is [about] at least 3.4 ml/g.

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In claim 5, at line 4, please delete "central."

6. (Twice Amended) A process for producing a tampon [in which an essentially cylindrical blank is shaped by] comprising the steps of: (i) winding up a [portion of] length of tape-shaped nonwoven material so as to from a blank; (ii) radially pressing a circumferential surface of the blank [relative to a longitudinal mid-axis of the blank] at a first

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pressure over an even number of [at least six portions] mutually adjacent longitudinally extending portions (in) the circumferential surface of the blank so as to produce a preform, the even number being at least six, [whereby] only [narrow strip-shaped] the longitudinally extending portions of the circumferential surface of the [winding] blank[, which are arranged at equal angular distances from one another, are] being pressed [to produce a], whereby the preform [which, in] has [cross-section, consists of] a central approximately circular compressed fibre core [of high compression and buckling strength] and [of] a plurality of longitudinal ribs [of a softer fibre structure with a coarser capillary structure which extend] formed between the longitudinally extending pressed portions, each of the longitudinal ribs extending radially outwards from the fibre core [and which are] and being separated from one another by outwardly open longitudinal grooves, [whereby] each of the longitudinal ribs having a distal end; and (iii) exposing only the longitudinal ribs [are exposed] to a [low uniform] radially applied second pressure, [radial relative to a longitudinal mid-axis of the preform, until the outer ends of the longitudinal ribs have formed a soft essentially smooth surface with the coarser capillary structure corresponding to the final form of the tampon being maintained] the second pressure being less than the first pressure so as to soften the distal ends of the longitudinal ribs.

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7. (Amended) Process according to Claim 6,
[characterized in that winding] wherein the step of radially pressing a circumferential surface of the blank comprises the step of centering the [winding] blank [is centered before the pressing] between a plurality of press dies.

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8. (Amended) Process according to claim 6, [characterized in that] wherein the preform is moved between the step of radially pressing a circumferential surface of the blank and the step of exposing the longitudinal ribs to a radially applied second pressure [for shaping proposes].

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9. (Twice Amended) An apparatus for producing a tampon from a tampon blank, comprising: [two] (i) first and second groups of press dies, at least six press dies in each group, the press dies arranged in a plane perpendicular to a [press] longitudinal axis; a] and adapted to move radially inward into a closed position so as to press a tampon blank into a tampon preform, the first group of press dies [forming press segments comprising] having side flanks so that when the first group of press dies are in [a] the closed position [of the press segments, that] their side flanks form [respectively] guide surfaces for each of [a] the second group of press dies, [guide surfaces which are designed as sliding plates, wherein] each of the press dies having an end face, the end faces [in a closed state end faces of the press dies] forming an essentially cylindrical pressing face when the press dies are in the closed position, [whereby the press segments and the sliding plates form a preforming press for pressing a preform, and] each of the press dies having a press cutter[s] projecting from [the] its end face[s of the press segments and of the sliding plates such that the preforming press is followed by], each of the press cutters adapted to form a rib in a tampon preform, the rib having a distal end; and (ii) a stationary conical forming die arranged coaxially relative to the press axis for softening the distal ends of the ribs, the forming die having an entry orifice [which is calculated to match] and an exit orifice, the entry orifice, having a diameter that matches the diameter of [an orifice of the preforming press, when its] the cylindrical pressing face formed

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by the end faces of the press dies [are] when they are in the closed [state [and an] position, the exit orifice [calculated to match] having a diameter that matches the final cross section of the finished tampon.

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10. (Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 9, [characterized in that] wherein each of the press cutters [(27)] projects radially inward from the press die end face(s) (25,26) of the press segments (22) and sliding plates (24) at] by an equal distance and is separated from the adjacent press cutter by an equal angular [distances] amount (α) [and over the same length].

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11. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 10, wherein [all] the end faces of each of the press [cutters have] dies has the same [pressing end faces] shape.

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12. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 11, [characterized in that] wherein [the pressing face (28)] each of the press cutters [(27) which is parallel to the press axis (21) is curved outwards] has a longitudinally extending curved face.

Please cancel claim 13, without prejudice.

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14. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim [13]
9, wherein the length of each of the press cutters in the longitudinal direction and the width of each of the press cutters in the radial direction[, radially relative to the [press axis,] are about 10^{mm} and 2 mm, respectively.

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Subj 11
15. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 14, wherein each of the press cutters has a distal end, and wherein when the press [is] dies are in the closed [state] position, the [pressing faces] distal ends of the press cutters [assume a clear

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distance from] are disposed 2 to 4 mm from the [press]
longitudinal axis.

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16. (Amended) Apparatus according to claim 9,
[characterized in that] wherein the conical forming die [(29)]
has an entry orifice [(30)] with a diameter of 20 mm and an exit
orifice [(32)] with a diameter of 13 mm.

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17. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 16,
wherein all the press dies are [first closable concentrically
relative to the press axis] adapted to move radially inward to
approximately the diameter of the [winding] blank, [and
subsequently] the press [segments] dies of the first group [of
press dies are] being adapted to move further radially inward
[simultaneously movable concentrically] into the [closing] closed
position[, and thereafter the sliding plates] before the press
dies of the second group [of press dies are movable to the final
dimension of the preform] move further radially inward.

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18. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 16,
wherein all of the press [segments and the sliding plates] dies
are adapted to simultaneously [movable concentrically relative to
the press axis] move radially inward into [a] the closed
position [which corresponds to the final dimension of the
preform].

19. (Twice Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 18,
further comprising (i) an input end adapted to receive a blank,
and (ii) a ram arranged on the input [side of the preforming
press which is movable] end, the ram being axially [for ejecting
a preform from the preforming press and] movable for pushing a
preform through the conical forming die.

20. (Amended) A tampon [formed by compressing selected areas of a blank, the tampon] comprising:

[a compressed,] an approximately [circular] cylindrical fibre core formed by compressing an approximately cylindrical fibre blank over at least six longitudinally extending regions spaced around the circumference of the fibre blank; and

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at least six longitudinal ribs extending from the core, the ribs being formed from portions of the blank disposed between the compressed regions so that the ribs are less compressed relative to the core and have a coarser fibre structure, each of the ribs having a distal end, the ribs having been subjected to a radially inward compression less than that applied to form the core so that the distal ends of the ribs are softer than the core.

Please add new claims 21 and 22, as follows:

21. Tampon according to Claim 1, wherein each of the longitudinal ribs contacts an adjacent longitudinal rib at a point adjacent its distal end.

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22. Process according to claim 6, wherein the step of exposing the longitudinal ribs to a radially applied second pressure further comprises shaping the distal ends of the ribs so that each of the ribs contacts an adjacent longitudinal rib at a point adjacent its distal end.

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 were pending in this application. Claims 1-12 and 14-20 have been amended. Claim 13 have been cancelled. New claims 21 and 22 have been added. Accordingly, upon entry of the foregoing amendment, claims 1-12 and 14-22 will be pending. No claims stand allowed. Applicants respectfully submit that, in light of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks, the